





PALMER LIBRARY  
CONNECTICUT  
COLLEGE



Presented by  
THE CARNEGIE CORPORATION





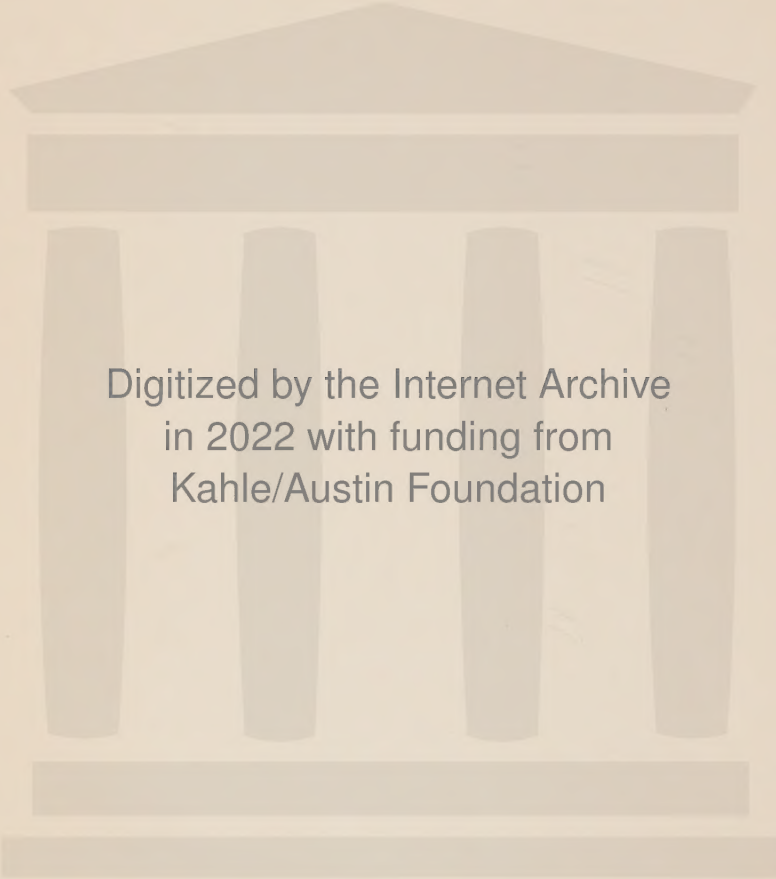












Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2022 with funding from  
Kahle/Austin Foundation

<https://archive.org/details/michaelangelo0000evlu>



**MICHAEL ANGELO**



## OTHER WORKS BY E. V. LUCAS

A WANDERER AMONG PICTURES  
A WANDERER IN FLORENCE  
A WANDERER IN PARIS  
A WANDERER IN VENICE  
A WANDERER IN HOLLAND  
A WANDERER IN LONDON  
LONDON REVISITED  
THE BRITISH SCHOOL  
VERMEER OF DELFT  
JOHN CONSTABLE, THE PAINTER  
    and, uniform with this volume,  
REMBRANDT  
CHARDIN AND VIGÉE-LEBRUN  
VELASQUEZ  
LEONARDO DA VINCI  
GIORGIONE  
VAN DYCK  
ANDREA DEL SARTO  
MURILLO  
FRANS HALS









THE HOLY FAMILY  
From the painting in the Uffizi, Florence



# MICHAEL ANGELO

BY  
E. V. LUCAS

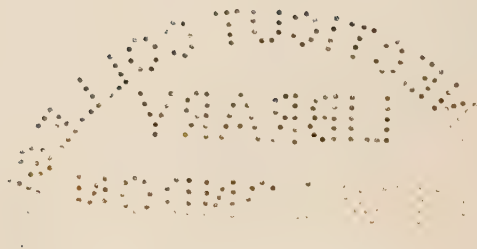
WITH A FRONTISPIECE IN COLOUR  
AND TWELVE OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS



METHUEN & CO. LTD.  
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.  
LONDON



*First Published in 1924*



PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN



# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PLATE
THE HOLY FAMILY . . . . . <i>Frontispiece</i>	
(UFFIZI, FLORENCE)	
THE HOLY FAMILY . . . . . I	
(BARGELLO, FLORENCE)	
THE TOMB OF LORENZO DE' MEDICI . . . . . II	
(SAN LORENZO, FLORENCE)	
PIETÀ . . . . . III	
(ST. PETER'S, ROME)	
BRUTUS . . . . . IV	
(BARGELLO, FLORENCE)	
DAVID . . . . . V	
(ACCADEMIA, FLORENCE)	
DANIEL . . . . . VI	
(SISTINE CHAPEL, ROME)	
SIBYLLA CUMÆA . . . . . VII	
(SISTINE CHAPEL, ROME)	
SIBYLLA PERSICA . . . . . VIII	
(SISTINE CHAPEL, ROME)	
SIBYLLA DELPHICA . . . . . IX	
(SISTINE CHAPEL, ROME)	
CHRIST AND THE MADONNA (from "THE LAST JUDGMENT") . X	
(SISTINE CHAPEL, ROME)	
THE FALL AND THE EXPULSION . . . . . XI	
(SISTINE CHAPEL, ROME)	
THE CREATION OF ADAM . . . . . XII	
(SISTINE CHAPEL, ROME)	







# MICHAEL ANGELO







# MICHAEL ANGELO

**M**ICHAEL ANGELO was the greatest genius, both with paint and marble, that the world has known. We might call him, thinking of his variety and vigour, the Shakespeare of art, although in many ways he oftener recalls Milton.

You can see in the frontispiece to this book—one of the glories of the Uffizi in Florence—how masterly and masterful he was, how disdainful of anything easy. To begin with, he chose a circle, which immediately sets up difficulties, for it is harder to compose figures in a circle than in an oblong or a square. Then observe the attitude of the Mother and Child—the Mother's arms and hands not in repose, but in action, and the restless Child's bent knee; everything difficult, everything requiring accurate knowledge and accurate treatment. Look at the modelling of the heads, which, even in reduced reproduction, is astonishingly fine; we seem almost to see them "in the round." Indeed,



## MICHAEL ANGELO

if one were to stand before this picture knowing nothing of the artist, the thought that it was the work of a sculptor would cross one's mind. The colour, though pleasing, is not subtle, and is subservient to the modelling.

It is real, too, this Family. We can believe in it, which we cannot always do when other and less thoughtful artists, following tradition or not caring for probabilities, paint the same group. Sir Joshua Reynolds, for example, although coming so much later and having the benefit of so many predecessors, in his "Holy Family" in the London National Gallery, makes Joseph an octogenarian—and no one who has read the *Discourses* can accuse their author of want of thought. And here let me say that the last of those *Discourses*, which the great English master addressed periodically to the students of the Royal Academy, was a tribute to Michael Angelo, mentioning not least his untiring toil: "The poorest of men, as he himself observed, did not labour from necessity more than he did from choice." And the concluding words of the series were these: "I reflect, not without vanity, that these *Discourses* bear testimony of my admiration of that truly divine man; and I should desire that the last words which I should pronounce



## MICHAEL ANGELO

in this Academy, and from this place [as President], might be the name of—Michael Angelo.”

Realist as Michael Angelo was in the grouping of the Holy Family, even he was disregardful of the national aspect. Here, however, he probably had his reasons. The picture was almost certainly intended by Angelo Doni, who gave the artist the commission, for a church. Churches are for the people, and Italian worshippers would be happier in contemplating a Madonna and Child who might be their compatriots than Eastern strangers. Thus, Murillo's Madonnas are Spaniards and Rubens's are Flemings.

Lastly, there are the figures in the background, which have led to much discussion. They have even been called Hebrew prophets. But my belief is that Michael Angelo meant them to typify the gods whose twilight set in when Christ was born and the mournful words “Great Pan is dead” went wailing round the world. Here is the Conqueror in the foreground; away in the distance are the conquered. Christianity has begun; Paganism is doomed. Incidentally, they may represent the only influence which this strong lonely man ever permitted a contemporary to exert upon him, for it was that equally thoughtful and sincere



## MICHAEL ANGELO

painter, Luca Signorelli of Arezzo, for whom Michael Angelo had deep respect, who first introduced nude figures in religious painting. There is a Madonna and Child by him, also in the Uffizi, and painted some years before Michael Angelo's, which has a strange resemblance to our frontispiece, but not, I think, any of the same imagery. But where Luca's interest in the nude and his passion for anatomy came to its finest flower was in his frescoes at Orvieto, but for which it is believed that Michael Angelo's frescoes in the Vatican might have been very different. There was yet another bond between Michael Angelo and Luca besides the younger man's admiration (and he was not given to indiscriminate enthusiasm for fellow artists), and that was Giorgio Vasari, the biographer of the Italian masters, who was both a kinsman of Luca and Michael Angelo's pupil and devout worshipper.

Our frontispiece has two peculiarities : it is the only easel picture by Michael Angelo which can be absolutely accepted, and it is his only picture in oil. His other works are in *tempera*. Oil painting he called a "pastime for children" !

Although this is Michael Angelo's only painting of the Madonna and Child, he made two other



## MICHAEL ANGELO

representations, also in circular form, in marble, one of which is in the Diploma Gallery of the Royal Academy in London and the other in the Bargello in Florence. He also made more than one statue of the Madonna and Child, the latest and most remarkable being that which has been placed over Lorenzo the Magnificent's tomb in Michael Angelo's sacristy in Florence. The Bargello *tondo*, which is, I think, the finer, is reproduced here, and you can see how regally beautiful the Madonna is, even though she may not correspond to your own idea of the simple and lowly Mother of Christ. The Child is being taught to read and has wearied—a pretty touch.

Most of the painters whose works are to be reproduced in this series were painters only. Michael Angelo was painter, sculptor and architect, in each branch of art creating something of surpassing power and significance. When I add that he was also a poet and an engineer and lived to be nearly ninety, it will be realized that the task of describing his career in a few words is not simple.

The son of Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni, a provincial magistrate, he was born at Caprese, a small town between La Verna and Arezzo, on March 6, 1475. At an early age he was taken



## MICHAEL ANGELO

by his foster mother, or *balia*, the wife of a stone-cutter, to her home at Settignano, whither the family then moved. Settignano, which has become a suburb of Florence, on the road to Fiesole, was then, and perhaps still is, a centre of stone-cutting, which now and then blossomed into something more rare, as in the case of the exquisite sculptor, Desiderio, who takes his name from the town; and Michael Angelo once remarked to Vasari that if he had anything good in him, it was because he was born amid the rare air of the Arezzo district and drew in with the milk of his *balia* the spirit of stonecutting.

As a boy he went to school in Florence, but at the age of thirteen, showing some aptitude for drawing and being bent upon it, he was apprenticed to Domenico Ghirlandaio, the goldsmith and the painter of the famous frescoes in the church of Santa Maria Novella, in the making of which the boy was useful, if not actually on the designs, as an attendant and colour-grinder. But he was with Ghirlandaio only a year, for one day Lorenzo the Magnificent came upon him copying a head of a faun in the Medici Gardens, where a collection of antiques was preserved, and he was so struck by his ability that he took the young modeller



## MICHAEL ANGELO

into his family and made him the associate of his three sons, Piero, Giuliano and Giovanni, and their tutor Poliziano, and gave him the advantage of training under Bertoldo, the sculptor, the director of the Medici Gardens school. The boy attended also at the Carmine church, where Masaccio's frescoes drew all young artists at that time, and it was during a session there that Torrigiano, a fellow-student, taunted by Michael Angelo's sardonic tongue, broke his nose.

To be transplanted to such surroundings of culture and erudition was a wonderful change for the boy, but the experience was of short duration, for in 1492, when Michael Angelo was seventeen, Lorenzo de' Medici died, and with him passed much of the glory of Florence. It was the first stroke of bad luck in a life which, with all its sublime achievement, was to be marked steadily by disappointment and frustration.

Great geniuses are probably always doomed to unhappiness. They know too much, see too much. But many of them have had alleviations; and Shakespeare even came to his end through a too convivial evening. The evidence is that Michael Angelo was almost consistently discontented, the sport of chance, the victim of intriguers, the dupe



## MICHAEL ANGELO

of princes, and the best evidence is perhaps his own physiognomy, as we have it in the bronze bust of him made by Daniele da Volterra, for if ever sorrow and disenchantment brooded over a face, they are there. Even were the nose not broken—and a broken nose invariably confers a suggestion of melancholy—the face would be profoundly sad. The eyes are filled with bitter knowledge and something akin to despair.

There is not space in which to tell the whole splendid, chequered story. Briefly, it may be said that the tragedy of Michael Angelo's life was that his imagination was illimitable and his powers were finite. He planned too grandly and had not the time nor the resources to fulfil. Also he was proud, impatient, scornful, and he often scented affront and deception where it is possible none was intended. Again, he was something of an Ishmael, solitary and suspicious. This and some very genuine quarrels and revolts are the reasons why he left so much unfinished. The tomb of Pope Julius, which was to have been a wonder of the world, exists only in fragments, of which the great figure of Moses in San Pietro in Vincoli in Rome is one, and the various Prisoners in the Accademia, in the Boboli Gardens in Florence, and



## MICHAEL ANGELO

in the Louvre, are others. The tombs of the Medici are incomplete, only those of two inferior members of the family being there, and even those without final touches. The two *tempera* panels in the London National Gallery, which promised to be so impressive, are unfinished.

But how much remains! And what a range, from the giant David to the cloisters of Santa Maria Degli Angeli in Rome, from the frescoes in the Sistine Chapel to the Bacchus in the Bargello, from the dome of St. Peter's to our frontispiece! But how Michael Angelo kept his thoughts may be seen by comparing his first work in sculpture, when he was still only a youth, the Pietà in St. Peter's, with his last work in the same medium, the Pietà in the Duomo in Florence.

Before we come to the giant David, let me say that in the Bargello, that wonderful Florentine treasure-house of Renaissance sculpture, is the head of Brutus, which is reproduced in this book: that grave, understanding head. You must go to the Bargello to compare the almost feminine charm and delicacy of Donatello's David and Verrocchio's David, both bronze masterpieces, with the gigantic figure hewn by Michael Angelo from a block of marble presented to him by the city. Michael



## MICHAEL ANGELO

Angelo's colossal statue confronts one three times in Florence—in the original, outside the Palazzo Vecchio ; in bronze in the Piazzale named after the sculptor, the pedestal having copies of his famous Medici tomb figures of Dawn and Evening, Night and Day ; and lastly in a plaster cast in the Accademia.

As I have said, Michael Angelo was a solitary. He never married, he had few friends, and his patrons were unstable. His chief consolation was reading Dante. The last years of his life were spent in exile.

All his life his passion was sculpture, although many years were perforce spent in painting. The frescoes of the Sistine Chapel are almost too vast in scheme and treatment to be assimilated ; the light is not good and the conditions are rarely fortunate for quiet study. Moreover, only by lying on one's back can one really get a right idea of them. But one sees enough to be amazed by such energy and power. The undertaking was one of the wonders of the world, and it proves both Michael Angelo's strength and the sweetness that lurked in him. Some of the scenes have a real tenderness. The figures of Daniel and the Cumean Sibyl are never to be forgotten by anyone who



## MICHAEL ANGELO

has gazed long upon them. These are painted on the ceiling and the slopes of the ceiling, but as reproduced in this book you would think them groups of statuary. I mention these in particular, but each Prophet and each Sibyl in turn has grandeur and greatness. One is conscious in the Sistine Chapel of being in the presence of the most vital and powerful creative force that ever art produced.

On the end wall of the chapel the "Last Judgment" was painted—a terrific work—but this it is impossible to describe. A detail is reproduced in this book, and this again looks to be sculpture. Round the walls other artists depicted more restful scenes, among them being Botticelli and Perugino. But Michael Angelo dominates all.

Paint cannot endure for ever, and there are signs that the Sistine frescoes are decaying; therefore one's first duty on visiting Rome is to see them. But Michael Angelo's marble is destined for immortality. Dying in Rome, at the age of nearly ninety, he was taken to Florence and buried in Santa Croce. His tomb, ornate enough, is unworthy.

The date of his death was February 18, 1564. On April 25 of the same year Shakespeare was born.



*Printed in Great Britain by*  
Butler & Tanner Ltd.,  
*Frome and London*







THE HOLY FAMILY

*Bargello, Florence*









THE TOMB OF ROSSIO DEI MEDICI

*San Lorenzo, Florence*

















BRUTUS

*by G. F. Kneller*

























VERVETIA, CUMAEA

Sistine Chapel, Rome









SIBYLLA PERSICA

*Sistine Chapel, Rome*









STATUE DELPHICA

MUSEE DES ARTS L. Rome









CHRIST AND THE MADONNA  
(From 'The Last Judgment')

*Sistine Chapel, Rome*









THE FALL AND THE EXPULSION









THE CREATION OF ADAM

Antique Chapel, Rome




1-11-12











759.52  
B888L

56967

CC Shain Main Desk  
13 NOV 1994 03:03 PM D484

Item 3 1839 001 700 875

To 2 1839 000 089 827

Due 11 DEC 1994

759.52

B888L  
Michael Angelo (Lucas, E. V)





P7-CQY-577

